

**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT
OF
AGRICULTURE**

STRATEGIC PLAN

Through June 2004

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VISION

New Jersey's agricultural and food industry will be productive and profitable while protecting the natural resources that sustain it, benefiting the overall environment, and supporting the health and welfare of the general public.

MISSION

- Promote and provide high quality, nutritious, abundant, safe and affordable food and other agricultural products;
- improve the economic viability of the agricultural industry and foster opportunities for farm profitability;
- preserve and protect agricultural and natural resources; and
- provide leadership and excellence in services to New Jersey agriculture and the general public.

INTRODUCTION

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture is a diverse organization serving multiple constituencies. Its programs and services range from the protection of our farmland and animal and plant resources to the distribution of millions of pounds of federally donated foods to New Jersey's schoolchildren and neediest citizens.

The Department is committed to ensuring a strong, innovative and profitable agricultural industry in the most densely populated state in the nation. Therefore, it is critical that we periodically reassess our goals and adjust our efforts to respond to changing agricultural, economic and land use factors.

This Strategic Plan, which will guide the department through June 30, 2004, the framework to achieve the mission set forth herein. The strategic planning process has enabled the department to:

- Focus on the goals and priorities critical to achieving our mission;
- Explore the factors and trends that affect the way in which we carry out our mission;
- Identify the issues we anticipate through June 30, 2004; and
- Find ways to adjust our organization, programs, services and management approach to meet the demands of a changing agricultural industry, related agri-business interests as well as the citizens of our state.

The plan that follows was developed under the leadership of Agriculture Secretary Charles M. Kuperus through an inclusive process that reflects the input of management, employees and the New Jersey State Board of Agriculture, the department's policy-making body. By identifying the department's vision, mission, major goals and objectives, the plan helps clarify why we do what we do and how the department and industry will operate in the future as we fulfill that mission.

The plan is headlined by seven major goals that support the agency's vision and mission. Each goal is modified by a series of objectives that specifically state what the department intends to accomplish. Performance measures indicate how the Department will measure success toward achieving those objectives.

Agriculture must continually evolve to adapt to new technology, changing market demand and other challenges. This plan provides the Department with the framework to meet current and emerging issues to ensure that New Jersey's agricultural industry will be strong, innovative and profitable, both now and in the future.

GOALS

1. Preserve farms.
2. Protect and conserve natural and agricultural resources.
3. Protect producers and consumers by ensuring safe, high-quality agricultural products and services.
4. Support and expand profitable, innovative agricultural and food industry development.
5. Provide access to fresh and nutritious foods for children, the needy and other New Jersey citizens.
6. Promote agricultural education, awareness and involvement.
7. Guarantee the delivery of quality services by a well-trained and motivated workforce.

GOAL 1: PRESERVE FARMS.

Permanently preserve and retain the maximum amount of New Jersey farmland to maintain a viable agriculture and food industry, and promote smart growth and a high quality of life for New Jersey citizens.

OBJECTIVE 1.1:

Deed restrict 130,000 acres of farmland for permanent preservation by June 30, 2004.

Performance Measure 1:

A total of 20,000 acres will be preserved annually.

Performance Measure 2:

All applications to the State will be processed within nine months from date of contract.

OBJECTIVE 1.2:

Ensure that permanently preserved farms are maintained in compliance with all deed restrictions to protect the public's investment in farmland preservation by verifying that land is maintained for agricultural use.

Performance Measure 1:

All permanently preserved farms will be monitored on an annual basis for deed compliance.

Performance Measure 2:

Landowner requests to undertake restricted activities on preserved farms – including subdivisions, the construction of agricultural labor housing and the replacement of single-family residential dwellings – will be processed within two months after they are received.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Integrate the Farmland Preservation Program with the smart growth strategy for New Jersey.

Performance Measure:

A coordinated strategy integrating farmland preservation and smart growth will be developed by June 2003.

OBJECTIVE 1.4:

Ensure responsible farmers are protected from restrictive municipal ordinances, and public and private nuisance complaints through administration of New Jersey's Right to Farm Act.

Performance Measure:

Ten new agricultural management practices will be developed and adopted.

OBJECTIVE 1.5

Improve coordination among local, county and state farmland preservation and Right to Farm efforts.

Performance Measure:

A training strategy will be developed and implemented for County Agriculture Development Board members and supporting professionals by December 2003.

GOAL 2: PROTECT AND CONSERVE NATURAL AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES.

Encourage and support stewardship of agricultural and urban open land and other natural resources to protect and enhance fertile soils, clean water, and productive and healthy animal and plant resources.

OBJECTIVE 2.1:

Work cooperatively with appropriate state and federal agencies to provide technical assistance to landowners to control erosion, sedimentation, non-point pollution and stormwater damage, promote water conservation, and develop and conserve agricultural water supplies.

Performance Measure 1:

Soil and water conservation plans will be developed for 100 percent of farms requesting technical assistance – on a minimum of 20,000 additional acres of farmland annually – within six months of requests being made.

Performance Measure 2:

Assistance will be provided in the review of 100 percent of applications for certification of soil erosion and sediment control plans for construction and mining activities, by June 2004.

Performance Measure 3:

Technical assistance will be provided for a minimum of 75 new soil erosion, sediment, nutrient, animal waste and water management contracts, in conjunction with the USDA-Environmental Quality Incentives Program, per year.

Performance Measure 4:

An additional 1,250 acres of irrigated land will be converted to water-conserving irrigation systems by June 2004.

OBJECTIVE 2.2

Detect and control indigenous and foreign plant pests, invasive weeds and diseases of agricultural and environmental importance, and to protect forested residential and recreational areas against defoliation and tree loss.

Performance Measure 1:

Action plans will be developed and implemented to protect plant resources within 30 days after a threat has been identified.

Performance Measure 2:

Gypsy moth defoliation will not exceed 40 percent in treated areas.

Performance Measure 3:

One million acres of agricultural crops, forests, parks, urban and suburban landscapes, and wetlands will be under targeted biological pest control.

OBJECTIVE 2.3:

To provide alternative biologic-based pest control strategies to control pests and reduce pesticide use.

Performance Measure:

Eight species of biological control agents (one million total) will be reared and inspected annually.

OBJECTIVE 2.4:

Protect the health of the livestock and poultry industries to protect human health, maximize food and fiber production and maintain an economically sound animal industry.

Performance Measure 1:

The animal health laboratory will perform 100 percent of requested diagnostic procedures for the detection of livestock and poultry diseases.

Performance Measure 2:

One hundred percent of suspected animal disease outbreaks will be investigated to provide prompt and accurate diagnoses, minimize animal losses and contain or eradicate disease.

Performance Measure 3:

Minimum standards of care for livestock and poultry will be submitted for publication in the *New Jersey Register* by January 2003.

Performance Measure 4:

A workable, multi-agency emergency response plan to highly contagious animal diseases will be developed by June 2004.

Performance Measure 5:

A food safety plan will be developed in cooperation with other state and federal agencies and private industry by June 2004.

**GOAL 3: PROTECT PRODUCERS AND CONSUMERS BY
ENSURING SAFE, HIGH-QUALITY
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS AND SERVICES.**

Administer fair and effective regulatory, inspection, grading and other quality assurance programs for food, agricultural products and agricultural inputs.

OBJECTIVE 3.1:

Ensure pest- and disease-free plant stock, and high-quality seed and other plant products for consumers and growers.

Performance Measure 1:

One hundred percent of New Jersey nurseries will be inspected and certified, 100 percent of all seed wholesalers will be registered, and seed offered for sale will be sampled at 300 high-volume wholesale and retail outlets.

Performance Measure 2:

Inspection services will be provided for 100 percent of requests for phytosanitary certificates to improve the interstate and international marketability of New Jersey grown plants.

OBJECTIVE 3.2:

Ensure healthy populations of honeybees for pollination of New Jersey's agricultural crops and to maximize honey production.

Performance Measure 1:

One hundred percent of migratory honeybee colonies will meet regulatory standards.

Performance Measure 2:

At least 8,500 healthy honeybee colonies will be available annually for use by growers for pollination.

OBJECTIVE 3.3:

Assist interstate and international movement of livestock, horses and poultry, and expand export opportunities for New Jersey agricultural animal producers by maintaining state-wide specific disease-free statuses.

Performance Measure 1:

A minimum of 30,000 regulatory laboratory tests will be performed on livestock and poultry to assure maintenance of specific disease-free statuses and 100 percent compliance with federal requirements, within the next two years.

Performance Measure 2:

Four to six inspections will be conducted on each licensed swine farm per year to enforce the Swine Health Protection Act.

Performance Measure 3:

The Livestock Dealer's License will be expanded to include poultry by June 2003.

Performance Measure 4:

A program will be developed to license live bird markets by June 2003.

OBJECTIVE 3.4:

Assist food animal producers in determining and meeting the requirements and/or expectations of Federal Regulatory Programs.

Performance Measure:

The number of livestock farms enrolled in and/or monitored under federal regulatory or state quality assurance programs will increase by 10 percent by June 2004.

OBJECTIVE 3.5:

Provide quality assurance for perishable agricultural commodities in accordance with Federal and State grade standards to ensure product marketability and maintain producer, marketer and consumer confidence.

Performance Measure 1:

One-hundred percent of requested inspections, gradings and certifications will be performed.

Performance Measure 2:

All required Organic Program Accreditation documents will be completed for submission to the National Organic Program by October 2002.

OBJECTIVE 3.6

Prevent unfair, disruptive trade practices that adversely affect the economic well being of the agricultural industry by administering and enforcing applicable laws and regulations.

Performance Measure 1:

One-hundred percent of identified non-cash buyers of perishable commodities and entities that purchase milk from farmers or farmer cooperatives will be licensed and bonded annually, and 100 percent of identified milk dealers and retail milk outlets will be licensed.

Performance Measure 2:

A minimum of 30 retail stores will be inspected at random to ensure accurate branding of New Jersey-produced products.

Performance Measure 3:

One-hundred percent of mislabeling complaints will be investigated.

OBJECTIVE 3.7:

Expand the Jersey Fresh Quality Grading Program.

Performance Measure:

The quantity of commodities sold under the Jersey Fresh label will increase by 10 percent annually.

OBJECTIVE 3.8:

Assure that feed, fertilizer and lime sold in the state are accurately labeled and are free from contaminants.

Performance Measure 1:

One-hundred percent manufacturers and distributors of feed, fertilizer and liming materials will be registered.

Performance Measure 2:

A minimum of 1,000 random samples will be collected and analyzed to confirm label accuracy.

OBJECTIVE 3.9:

Provide third-party audits to ensure compliance with safe food production practices when requested by owners of agribusiness involved in the production, packing, storage and marketing of fresh produce, and report results in a timely manner.

Performance Measure:

One-hundred percent of third-party audit requests by growers, packers, shippers, repackers and processors will be met, with results of audits reported within 30 days.

OBJECTIVE 3.10:

Assist in maintaining a safe and high quality supply of fish and seafood products for New Jersey consumers.

Performance Measure:

A total of 200 individuals (processors, retailers, foodservice personnel) will be trained and kept current in food safety practices by June 2004.

GOAL 4: SUPPORT AND EXPAND PROFITABLE, INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT.

Foster agricultural economic growth, profitability and a positive business climate through technical and financial assistance, market development, and effective product and industry promotion.

OBJECTIVE 4.1:

Increase the profitability of New Jersey's agricultural industry.

Performance Measure 1:

Farm-gate sales will increase annually.

Performance Measure 2:

A growth strategy will be developed for each sector of the agricultural industry by December 2003.

OBJECTIVE 4.2:

Create additional income for New Jersey farmers.

Performance Measure:

Six value-added strategies will be developed to improve farmer participation in the market chain and to allow for additional income beyond the marketing of raw farm commodities.

OBJECTIVE 4.3:

Expand New Jersey's fish and seafood industries market-share.

Performance Measure:

Annual sales will increase annually.

OBJECTIVE 4.4:

Support the orderly growth of the State's aquaculture industry through the establishment of business-friendly and environmentally sound policies.

Performance Measure 1:

The overall value of farm-gate sales of aquacultured products will increase by 10 percent annually.

Performance Measure 2:

Agricultural management practices and an aquatic organism health management plan will be implemented in five aquaculture facilities by June 2004.

OBJECTIVE 4.5:

Maintain a viable dairy industry in New Jersey.

Performance Measure 1:

A minimum of 130 dairy herds will be maintained statewide.

Performance Measure 2:

Gross sales by the dairy sector will increase annually.

OBJECTIVE 4.6:

Promote the economic development of New Jersey's equine industry.

Performance Measure 1:

A strategy will be developed by March 2003 -- in collaboration with the standardbred industry -- to identify ways to strengthen New Jersey's standardbred industry.

Performance Measure 2:

The number of horses that are eligible to participate in the New Jersey Sire Stakes Program will increase by 5 percent by June 30, 2004.

Performance Measure 3:

A strategy will be developed by March 2003 -- in collaboration with thoroughbred industry leaders -- to identify ways to revitalize the thoroughbred industry.

Performance Measure 4:

A strategy will be developed by March 2003 -- in collaboration with the pleasure breed horse industry -- to identify ways to strengthen the pleasure horse breed industry.

OBJECTIVE 4.7:

Increase consumer consumption and farm income through an aggressive marketing program to promote awareness of and preference for New Jersey farm products.

Performance Measure:

Gross sales of New Jersey farm products will increase annually.

OBJECTIVE 4.8:

Provide a variety of technical assistance services and special projects including technical assistance on farm building construction codes, agricultural credit and finance, food processing initiatives, agricultural recycling, farmland assessment procedures, sales tax requirements, interstate trucking regulations, farm energy conservation, and farm risk management.

Performance Measure 1:

Technical assistance will be provided to 100 percent of farm operations and agri-business firms that request it.

Performance Measure 2:

Participation of New Jersey farmers in crop insurance programs will increase by 15 percent by June 2004.

OBJECTIVE 4.9:

Develop an Agricultural Smart Growth Plan and appropriate policy positions on major land use planning initiatives.

Performance Measure 1:

An Agricultural Smart Growth Plan will be developed by June 2003.

Performance Measure 2:

Policy positions on current major land use planning initiatives will be developed by June 2003.

Performance Measure 3:

The Agricultural Smart Growth Plan will be integrated and coordinated with other federal, state agency, local and private planning efforts by June 2004.

GOAL 5: PROVIDE ACCESS TO FRESH AND NUTRITIOUS FOODS FOR CHILDREN, THE NEEDY AND OTHER NEW JERSEY CITIZENS.

Implement food and nutrition assistance programs to maximize participation by eligible New Jersey citizens, and strengthen agriculture's relationship with the food industry.

OBJECTIVE 5.1:

Ensure that all commodities purchased for use in the state's school lunch program meet the grade and condition specifications of the contract.

Performance Measure:

One-hundred percent of requested inspections will be performed to ensure quality control.

OBJECTIVE 5.2:

Continue to provide financial assistance to promote and expand school lunch and other child nutrition programs in public and private schools, residential and non-residential childcare institutions and other community service organizations.

Performance Measure 1:

One-hundred percent of child nutrition sponsors will receive federal and state meal reimbursements within 30 days.

Performance Measure 2:

The number of child nutrition sponsors will increase by 5 percent annually.

Performance Measure 3:

The number of children participating in the School Breakfast Program will increase by 5 percent annually.

OBJECTIVE 5.3:

Provide for high quality, safe and nutritious federally and locally donated foods to New Jersey's school children, institutional residents and needy citizens.

Performance Measure:

One-hundred percent of all safe food offered by federal and local sources will be accepted and distributed.

OBJECTIVE 5.4

Promote and facilitate a thriving food industry that provides maximum marketing opportunities for New Jersey farmers.

Performance Measure:

Develop a strategy for each sector of New Jersey's food industry, including food retailers, food preparers and processors, and restaurants.

GOAL 6: PROMOTE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, AWARENESS AND INVOLVEMENT.

Ensure the sustainability of New Jersey's agricultural industry through agricultural education, youth development, training opportunities, and successful communication with the agricultural community, general public and all levels of government.

OBJECTIVE 6.1:

Develop a comprehensive food and agricultural education plan for junior high and high school students that includes increasing the number of schools that offer food and agricultural educational opportunities.

Performance Measure:

A comprehensive plan will be developed by March 2003.

OBJECTIVE 6.2:

Prepare young people for careers in agriculture by providing leadership, resources and services to secondary school students in food, agriculture and natural resource education programs and to certified agriculture teachers.

Performance Measure 1:

Career development events and leadership development conferences will be provided for a minimum of 2,000 agriculture education students per year.

Performance Measure 2:

Professional development conferences will be provided for all agriculture education teachers and technical assistance will be provided to all school districts with agriculture education programs per year.

OBJECTIVE 6.3:

Through the Conservation Partnership, educate high school students about the importance of soil and water conservation.

Performance Measure:

Student participation in conservation education programs will increase by 10 percent annually.

OBJECTIVE 6.4:

Offer training to agricultural industry professionals to prepare them for leadership roles in the agricultural industry.

Performance Measure:

Twenty agricultural industry professionals per year will receive agricultural leadership training.

GOAL 7: GUARANTEE THE DELIVERY OF QUALITY SERVICES BY A WELL-TRAINED AND MOTIVATED WORKFORCE.

Produce quality in all we do through a diverse, effectively managed, highly trained and committed staff supported by efficient use of available technology and resources in a work environment that fosters excellence.

OBJECTIVE 7.1:

Provide continual technical and professional training to the department's veterinarians, laboratory clinicians and service staff, scientists, agricultural products agents and soil conservation district personnel to assure proficient service and the maintenance of appropriate certifications.

Performance Measure 1:

One-hundred percent of professional and technical staff will meet licensing, certification and training requirements annually.

Performance Measure 2:

Continuing education opportunities will be offered to at least 5 percent of departmental staff annually.

OBJECTIVE 7.2:

Recruit and maintain a highly efficient, well-trained and motivated workforce in support of Department needs.

Performance Measure:

One-hundred percent of vacant positions will be filled in accordance with approved levels, available appropriations, current regulations and the Department's Workforce Plan.

OBJECTIVE 7.3:

Develop electronic information systems that provide a broader range of programs and services to department constituencies while improving the efficiency of the delivery of these programs and services.

Performance Measure:

Web-enabled services will be developed by June 30, 2004.

OBJECTIVE 7.4:

Recognize quality performance from employees and identify areas for improvement.

Performance Measure:

One-hundred percent of Performance Annual Reviews (PARs) will be completed by March 31 of each year.